The Thousand-Click Bureaucracy

The erosion of due process in digital administration

Mariano Enrique Torres Ponce

Lawyer (LL.B.), Specialist in Computer Law

ORCID: 0009-0009-6284-3867

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Abstract

Digital administration has been widely promoted as a solution to inefficiency and institutional opacity in public services. However its deployment has shifted procedural burdens from the state to the individuals who must operate the technological systems that govern access to rights. The result is a thousand-click bureaucracy in which legal participation depends on the user's capacity to navigate digital platforms, maintain continuous visibility within the system and produce evidence of actions that interfaces do not always acknowledge. This transformation fragments procedural guarantees and weakens legal certainty because failures in the system generate consequences attributed to the user. The law continues to protect due process in theory while practice increasingly depends on technical performance and digital literacy. The concept of technological due process proposed in this article demands that administrative legitimacy be evaluated not only by formal legality but by the responsiveness, traceability and clarity of the technological infrastructures through which authority is exercised. Recognizing this shift is essential to ensure that modernization of the state does not erode the very rights it is meant to protect.

Keywords

digital administration; bureaucratic burden; technological due process; administrative law; public governance; procedural fairness; system-level bureaucracy; algorithmic opacity; legal certainty; access to rights; e-government; digital inequality

Executive Summary

Background: Digital administration reconfigures how individuals access rights by replacing human-mediated procedures with interactions governed by platforms. This transition introduces an operational layer that determines when procedural actions exist for the state. Administrative participation becomes inseparable from the user's ability to sustain visibility within technological systems. Classical guarantees of due process relied on observable interactions and shared procedural understanding. The virtualization of the state relocates those guarantees inside interfaces that remain opaque. What appears as modernization may separate legal legitimacy from the practical conditions needed to exercise rights.

Gap: The evolution of bureaucracy under digital infrastructures is recognized but insufficiently theorized in terms of legal protection. Analyses tend to celebrate efficiency gains while overlooking the silent transfer of procedural labor to citizens and lawyers. There is limited exploration of how inequality, exclusion and psychological burden emerge from technological mediation. The internal logic of systems can produce effects similar to administrative arbitrariness without human intervention. Jurisdictions have expanded digital procedures without developing doctrine capable of addressing failures that jeopardize procedural existence. The absence of conceptual tools leaves the erosion of due process without a precise legal description.

Purpose: The article conceptualizes the thousand-click bureaucracy as a contemporary form of administrative power. It examines how digital systems transform responsibility for procedural success and redefine the relationship between state and citizen. The analysis argues that legal certainty now depends on the responsiveness, traceability and transparency of the technological environment. Modernization becomes problematic when the validity of a right depends on actions that the legal system does not acknowledge as burdens. The objective is to establish a framework in which the protection of rights includes the conditions required to operate public infrastructure.

Methodology: The study uses a doctrinal approach grounded in administrative and

constitutional theory and supported by comparative insights from digital reforms in Europe, Latin America and the Asia Pacific region. The analysis focuses on how interactions with platforms construct or negate procedural existence. Sources from international organizations and scholarly research support the evaluation of system-level bureaucracy and the consequences of automation for accountability. The perspective centers on the legal subject who must navigate digital procedures to remain visible to the state.

Results: Digital administration redistributes bureaucratic weight from institutions to individuals. Citizens and lawyers perform operational tasks essential to the functioning of public authority while remaining outside the framework of institutional responsibility. Technological fragility produces harm that is attributed to those subject to the system rather than to the system itself. Inequality in digital capability becomes inequality in legal access. The transformation reveals governance by system design rather than by traditional procedural norms. Rights remain formal yet fragile. Their exercise depends on hidden processes that may erase procedural actions without trace.

Conclusion: The thousand-click bureaucracy illustrates how modernization can silently erode due process when it privileges institutional efficiency over access to rights. Protection must extend to the technological conditions that sustain participation. Legal doctrine must recognize system responsiveness as a requirement for legitimacy in digital administration. The future of administrative justice will depend on ensuring that technological environments reinforce rather than undermine the foundations of legal certainty.

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Chapter 1

Digital government and the hidden shift of procedural burdens

Digital government has been promoted as the solution to the slowness and opacity of traditional bureaucracies. The expectation was that online platforms would simplify procedures, shorten processing times and reduce the administrative footprint of the state (Fountain, 2001). The transition was framed as an expansion of accessibility, moving from fixed office hours to permanent digital availability. Yet this transformation has not removed complexity. It has redistributed it. What seems like progress for institutions has become a burden for those who depend on public services. The reduction of visible bureaucracy conceals the emergence of a new model that demands time, skill and constant oversight from the citizen, who must now support the technological infrastructure that sustains administrative action.

1.1 From paper visibility to digital opacity

Paper-based administration placed the procedural relationship between citizens and the state in a domain that could be seen and understood. The stamped document and the physical circulation of files revealed that an act existed, that the administration had received it and that some official was responsible for moving it forward. Even when bureaucracy produced delays, individuals could point to the file itself as proof of institutional inertia. That material trace served as a minimal guarantee of certainty within the administrative process (Mairal, 2018). The procedural act occupied space and time in a tangible way, which allowed errors or arbitrariness to be contested.

The transition to digital administration did not merely remove paper. It replaced a visible legal environment with a technological structure that remains largely hidden from those who depend on it. What used to be a physical acknowledgment is now represented through database entries that determine whether a request will be processed,

without revealing how or when that processing will occur (Fountain, 2001). Interaction with the state becomes mediated through interfaces that only expose fragments of internal operations. The system displays what has been programmed to display. The rest remains inaccessible.

This shift produces a form of structural uncertainty. A confirmation message suggests compliance, although the actual incorporation of the submission into the administrative workflow is not directly verifiable by the user (Fundación Alternativas, 2023). The individual lacks the capacity to distinguish between a valid act and a silent failure caused by system malfunction. The administration regains discretion over visibility, which was once a safeguard for citizens. When evidence is digital and controlled by the institution, procedural vulnerability increases.

What changes here is not only the form of communication but the distribution of procedural knowledge. Under the paper regime, a static file could prove that nothing had moved. Digital stagnation remains ambiguous because the front-end interface may not reflect the true state of the file (Peeters et al., 2018). The user becomes responsible for interpreting whether the system is functioning correctly. The administration is no longer forced to provide explanations because the absence of movement has no physical manifestation.

Time also becomes harder to justify and contest. In digital administration the delay has no body. The user sees the same screen without knowing whether the administration has acted or whether the platform simply has not updated the visible information (Andersen et al., 2010). Waiting becomes a private experience without evidence, and therefore without the basis for a claimable right. The administration reduces its duty to inform at the very moment in which design choices obstruct the user's ability to understand what is happening to the procedure.

Digital opacity alters fundamental principles of administrative legitimacy. The ability to verify that the state is fulfilling its obligations becomes dependent on infrastructures that citizens cannot audit. The visibility that once enabled accountability dissolves into automated indicators that do not explain their origin. Access to rights now presupposes trust in an invisible system whose errors cannot be easily proven by those affected. This transformation demands that transparency be treated not only as a legal principle but as a mandatory requirement of technological design (Rose-Ackerman & Lindseth, 2017). If digital administration obscures the conditions for the exercise of rights, it weakens the very function it was intended to improve.

1.2 Administrative burdens and the myth of efficiency

The promise of digital government relied on a powerful narrative. Technology was expected to eliminate the inefficiencies of traditional bureaucracy and to empower citizens through streamlined access to the state. Faster procedures, fewer physical barriers and less institutional friction were offered as direct benefits of modernization (Fountain, 2001). The act of interacting with the administration would become simpler, more accessible and more predictable. In reality, this transformation redistributed tasks that were once the responsibility of the state toward those seeking public services, generating a new kind of administrative burden hidden behind the aesthetics of convenience. Online procedures demand continuous attention, technological literacy and the capacity to adapt to evolving platforms. The skills required to navigate digital systems go far beyond the legal understanding historically expected from citizens and even from legal professionals (Cerrillo i Martínez, 2011). Filing a request today includes deciphering user interfaces, handling digital signatures and ensuring compatibility among systems that do not always communicate properly. The absence of these competencies does not suspend legal obligations. Instead, it silently excludes individuals from exercising rights that still exist formally but are no longer materially accessible.

Efficiency becomes a conditional concept. The state reduces visible processing time by transferring invisible effort to the citizen. What appears as institutional speed is achieved through a private workload that remains outside public awareness (Bovens & Zouridis, 2002). The administrative burden has not decreased. It has been privatized. The digital environment turns compliance into a sequence of technical operations whose failure may lead to consequences as severe as the loss of economic benefits or procedural opportunities. The fact that these consequences derive from technological misalignment rather than legal error reveals a profound imbalance in the allocation of risk.

This imbalance reshapes accountability. Under the paper regime, if a submission was mishandled or delayed, responsibility could be attributed to identifiable public agents. The transition to digital administration obscures responsibility because errors become harder to locate. The citizen cannot prove whether a failure occurred due to personal oversight or because the system malfunctioned without notice (Fundación Alternativas, 2023). The presumption of system reliability places the burden of uncertainty entirely on the user. The administration gains insulation from procedural scrutiny at the same time that the citizen loses the ability to contest institutional omissions.

The myth of administrative efficiency depends on concealing these dynamics. The

platform is designed to appear intuitive while requiring significant labor that remains both unpaid and unrecognized by the institution benefiting from it (Andersen et al., 2010). The modern bureaucracy hides its complexity not by eliminating it but by shifting it into domestic spaces and private schedules. The improvement claimed by the state is often an improvement only for the state. The user compensates for system instability through repetition, documentation and constant monitoring. The absence of paper does not liberate the citizen. It obliges them to act as a technician to maintain access to what should be public service.

This evolution challenges the very logic of administrative guarantees. A digital system can accelerate internal operations while simultaneously making it more difficult for individuals to participate and defend their rights. The administration appears more efficient because its workload becomes invisible to the public eye. Yet the true metric is not how quickly the institution can register an action. The true metric is whether people can exercise their rights without disproportionate personal cost. When efficiency improves for the administration and worsens for the citizen, the balance of public service is lost. Digital convenience becomes a narrative strategy rather than a legal reality.

1.3 The emergence of the thousand-click bureaucracy

Digital administration produces a transformation that extends beyond the interface. The state continues to define legal procedures, yet individuals must ensure that such procedures occur by performing tasks that were once institutional responsibilities. Access to rights begins with the ability to authenticate identity, maintain functional credentials and interpret signals that the system provides without revealing its internal logic (Fundación Alternativas, 2023). Legal certainty depends on a sequence of operations that must be executed correctly even when the individual cannot understand how success is determined.

The thousand-click bureaucracy takes shape in the accumulation of micro responsibilities. A single interaction appears easy to perform, although rights become accessible only after a demanding chain of technical maneuvers. Compliance depends on the user's capacity to manipulate formats, capture records of invisible actions and repeat submissions until the system acknowledges their existence. Any interruption can erase procedural progress without explanation (Bovens & Zouridis, 2002). The administration interprets technical failure as individual failure. This logic imposes consequences that cannot be avoided through diligence alone.

The shift also modifies the meaning of due process. Digital systems can satisfy formal legality while producing exclusion in practice. Interfaces that are difficult to un-

derstand or unresponsive in critical moments limit participation for those who lack digital fluency A decision delivered through law may rely on a process that (Cerrillo i Martínez, 2011).

was inaccessible to those affected by it. The principle of equality before the law becomes theoretical when the ability to act depends on platform compatibility rather than legal standing.

This transformation extends to the psychological dimension of legal participation. Individuals must remain alert at all times because any silence or delay can produce harm. The environment induces uncertainty about whether procedural actions are being recognized. Modernization appears to reduce bureaucracy, although the cost of sustaining procedural visibility is transferred to the person who interacts with the system (Fountain, 2001). The responsibility to avoid invisibility becomes an unspoken condition for the exercise of rights.

What emerges is a reconfiguration of administrative authority. The design of the system defines the procedural environment and silently governs participation (Torres Ponce, 2022). The citizen becomes an operator of public infrastructure who must undertake the effort required to make the legal bond operative. The state benefits from reduced operational obligations while the user assumes the role of ensuring that procedures function as intended. This form of bureaucracy is not residual or accidental. It represents a contemporary expression of power that obscures the expansion of burdens behind the discourse of accessibility and efficiency. It requires legal recognition because ignoring its presence allows the law to protect a version of due process that no longer describes the conditions in which rights are exercised.

Chapter 2

System-level bureaucracy and technological due process

The digital transformation of public administration has introduced a new institutional actor. The technological system, once a mere tool, now participates in the procedural relationship in a constitutive manner. Access to rights and the validity of administrative actions depend on the functioning of digital infrastructure that mediates every stage of the process. Bureaucratic authority is reorganized within a framework where decisions are shaped not only by legal norms but also by system design, platform availability and interface behavior (Bovens & Zouridis, 2002). The citizen interacts with a hybrid structure in which the state delegates essential functions to technology while keeping control of the outcome.

This shift demands a rethinking of due process. Traditional legal frameworks assumed direct engagement between the individual and public officials. In the digital environment, the system itself becomes the first gatekeeper of administrative justice. A procedural claim exists only if the platform recognizes it. The state no longer merely evaluates compliance; it defines the technical conditions under which compliance is possible (Rose-Ackerman & Lindseth, 2017). Legal guarantees are weakened when their effectiveness depends on the quality and intelligibility of infrastructures that citizens cannot understand or verify.

System-level bureaucracy consolidates its power through invisibility. Interfaces appear neutral while concealing how requests are sorted, filtered or delayed. The distribution of risk becomes asymmetric because the citizen does not control the means through which procedural acts are recorded or validated. What appears as a straightforward digital action may involve complex processes that introduce uncertainty without accountability. The state benefits from automation while those who rely on the platform bear the consequences of malfunction (Fundación Alternativas, 2023). The institutional responsibility becomes fragmented across technical layers that users can-

not navigate. This transformation also modifies the nature of administrative legitimacy. In the paper world, evidence of procedural existence could be shown physically. In the digital state, proof is conditional. Confirmation does not always guarantee incorporation into the legal process. Errors become difficult to detect and almost impossible to challenge. Without transparency, the affected individual cannot demonstrate institutional omission or algorithmic misrecognition. Administrative law loses part of its capacity to discipline public authority when the authority is mediated by systems that refuse to reveal their logic (Cerrillo i Martínez, 2011).

The bureaucratic structure born from this paradigm does not act through human discretion but through coded rules and automated limits. These systems introduce categories of exclusion that are not always contemplated by the law. Lacking a specific document format, a compatible device or timely access to the platform may result in the procedural death of a claim. The risks inherent to this model are not anecdotal deviations. They are structural. The system controls inclusion and exclusion through technical constraints rather than through legal norms (Fountain, 2001). Citizenship becomes conditioned by a technological regime that converts rights into opportunities dependent on system performance.

What emerges is a new form of constitutional concern. When the medium becomes a determinant of legality, the principle of equality before the law is at risk. Individuals with fewer digital resources are deprived of effective participation in administrative procedures. The rhetoric of modernization conceals a growing procedural inequality that the legal system has not yet addressed with the seriousness it demands. The legitimacy of public authority remains tied to the guarantee that procedures are accessible and comprehensible. Digital administration challenges that legitimacy when it creates conditions where rights exist only for those who can successfully operate the system.

2.1 Information systems as new gatekeepers

The digitalization of administrative procedures has led to the emergence of new gatekeeping mechanisms operating through system design rather than institutional discretion. Platforms determine whether a citizen can interact with the state by controlling identity verification, the availability of procedural routes and the technical compatibility of submissions (Fountain, 2001). The first barrier to access no longer appears at the entrance to a public office. It appears at the moment of technological mediation, where a failure to authenticate or to navigate the interface with precision may prevent the individual from entering the administrative domain altogether.

The logic of this gatekeeping is not expressed in legal language. It is embedded in interface decisions that define which actions are visible, which are blocked, which

are mandatory and which systems must communicate with one another to validate a procedural act. Administrative law traditionally relied on norms that were formally promulgated and could be interpreted through legal reasoning. In the digital environment, implementation rules are concealed within code, and compliance depends on the user's ability to detect, interpret and adapt to constraints never expressed as formal obligations (Bovens & Zouridis, 2002). The system speaks a language that the citizen is expected to understand without having been taught.

This shift in procedural access transforms power relations. Institutional control is exercised before the state even becomes aware of the individual's claim. The ability to register a legal request becomes contingent on how well the system responds to the interaction. If the platform rejects a document because of a technical requirement unknown to the user, the administration may never acknowledge that a procedural initiative existed. Legal standing is therefore conditioned by technological success rather than by substantive entitlement (Cerrillo i Martínez, 2011). What defines the beginning of the procedure is not the law but the system.

The design of these infrastructures also centralizes discretion. Automation of access limits visible human decision making. Instead of challenging a clerk's refusal, the citizen confronts a platform that produces no reason for denying entry. The architecture of the system shapes institutional behavior without institutional accountability. Automated gatekeeping exercises a form of authority that cannot be questioned because it is not recognized as authority. The legal subject becomes vulnerable to silent forms of exclusion that remain beyond the reach of judicial review (Fundación Alternativas, 2023).

The result is a paradoxical distribution of responsibility. When barriers are procedural in the traditional sense, the state must justify their existence. When barriers are technical, citizens must justify their inability to overcome them. This inversion erodes protections historically associated with the rule of law. If a right depends on a series of technological operations that the individual cannot understand or control, the guarantee becomes conditional. The state preserves decision-making power while transferring the burden of entry to those who must persist through repetitive validations, uncertain confirmations and ambiguous system responses.

What emerges is a structural form of inequality. Not everyone encounters the digital state with the same resources. Some users have knowledge, time and tools to navigate complex systems. Others do not. The gatekeeper role of information systems transforms these differences into discrepancies in procedural existence. The legal system does not yet recognize the extent to which technology filters access to rights, but its effects are already shaping the experience of citizenship. When technological mediation becomes a prerequisite for legal recognition, the administration gains efficiency

while the foundational promise of equality weakens.

2.2 Digital interfaces and inequality of arms

Digital interfaces govern the first encounter between the individual and public authority. They establish what actions are possible, what information must be provided and what rules must be followed to complete each step of the procedure. In this environment, the traditional principle of equality of arms becomes conditioned by the user's ability to understand and respond to the technological demands imposed by the platform (Cerrillo i Martínez, 2011). Administrative justice depends on whether a system offers conditions that enable participation on fair and comprehensible terms.

The interface does not operate as a passive medium. It shapes the legal relationship through design decisions that determine whether users can successfully interact with the state. Complex navigation paths, hidden functions and fragmented information flows create asymmetries between individuals who possess digital fluency and those who do not (Bovens & Zouridis, 2002). The consequences of these asymmetries are tangible. Some users are able to comply with requirements in a timely manner. Others struggle to understand the meaning of each step and risk suffering procedural harm for reasons unrelated to the merits of their case.

The global experience with digital administration confirms that these inequalities are systemic. In Europe and North America, access to electronic government services remains uneven because digital literacy and resource distribution are socially stratified (OECD, 2020). Even in countries with robust IT infrastructure, vulnerable groups encounter significant obstacles. Elderly populations, undocumented migrants, and individuals with disabilities face a higher probability of exclusion due to interface complexity that does not accommodate their circumstances (United Nations, 2022). The universal nature of the platform does not produce universal access. It produces a universal expectation that citizens must adapt to the architecture of the system.

The situation is particularly severe in states where digital transformation advances faster than social support mechanisms. In Latin America, the rapid expansion of administrative portals has not always been accompanied by equal access to training or devices (ECLAC, 2021). Citizens in Argentina and Chile can file appeals, pay taxes and register social benefits online, yet many encounter procedural risks due to unstable connectivity, limited digital education or regional disparities in infrastructure. The legal framework assumes equal ability to use the system, while reality continues to demonstrate persistent structural barriers. The appearance of modernization does not eliminate the need for institutional responsibility in guaranteeing accessibility.

Spain illustrates a different dimension of the problem. The deployment of advanced digital platforms has achieved wide coverage, yet the complexity of some systems has generated a form of dependency on private intermediaries to complete basic interactions with the state (Fundación Alternativas, 2023). This phenomenon reintroduces costs and inequalities that digital administration was expected to overcome. The procedural model may appear sophisticated, but sophistication does not always equate to justice. A platform that supports the administration but overwhelms the user undermines the principle of equal access to legal remedies.

In all these contexts, the interface functions as a silent arbiter of procedural existence. It defines who will succeed and who will fail long before any public official reviews the content of the case. Access to rights becomes determined by a combination of technological literacy, economic resources and psychological resilience to uncertainty caused by system opacity. These burdens remain invisible to the institutional imagination because they are distributed privately across individual lives. When the state adopts technology without considering the differences among users, it transforms those differences into procedural disadvantages that erode the foundational equality that administrative law is meant to protect.

2.3 The fragility of electronic notification and time

Electronic notification was introduced as a solution to the inefficiencies of physical communication and the delays associated with traditional mail services. Digital systems promised instantaneous delivery and real-time awareness of administrative actions. Yet the procedural reality reveals that time, once traceable through material indicators, has become an abstract and fragile component of administrative justice (Fundación Alternativas, 2023). The legal consequences of notification depend on whether the system delivers the message and whether the user is able to detect it within the designated period. The burden of vigilance shifts entirely to the individual.

The law historically treated notification as an act of the administration. It signaled that a decision had been made and marked the beginning of procedural deadlines. In the digital environment, the meaning of notification changes. The moment in which the system generates an alert does not always coincide with the moment in which the user perceives it (Cerrillo i Martínez, 2011). Platform downtimes, email misclassifications, incompatibility with devices or accessibility failures may interrupt the link between administrative action and the awareness required to respond in time. The validity of a deadline becomes contingent on interface behaviors that neither the citizen nor the legal professional can control. This disconnect undermines the reliability of procedural safeguards. If the state assumes that notification has occurred merely because

the system produced a timestamp, the procedural relationship is reduced to a fiction of access. Due process becomes compromised when legal consequences arise before the user is capable of knowing that the consequence exists (Rose-Ackerman & Lindseth, 2017). The administration enjoys operational efficiency while the citizen bears the risk of any misalignment between technological function and human perception.

The fragility of time in digital administration also produces psychological burdens. The user experiences the constant fear that a deadline might expire without notice. The absence of movement on the screen does not necessarily prove that nothing has happened. It merely indicates that the system has not chosen to reveal what has occurred. The individual must monitor notifications frequently and document their interactions to defend against potential disputes over timing. This ongoing vigilance represents a form of invisible labor that the legal framework does not acknowledge (Bovens & Zouridis, 2002). The stability once offered by material procedures is replaced by a persistent uncertainty that corrodes confidence in the system.

Accountability becomes diluted when time is governed by automated triggers. If a procedural loss occurs, the citizen cannot demand an explanation that traces decisions back to identifiable agents, because the system itself becomes the source of the harm. The administration treats technological malfunction as an exception while users experience it as a recurring possibility. The burden is placed on individuals to prove that the system failed, even though they have no tools to produce such evidence (Fountain, 2001). This imbalance reveals that technological mediation can create conditions where rights are jeopardized without producing a traceable violation.

What emerges is a need to redefine the meaning of procedural time in the digital state. Deadlines and notifications remain fundamental instruments for protecting fairness and predictability. However, when these instruments depend on technologies not designed to guarantee visibility or comprehension, the foundational role of time in due process is endangered. Digital administration requires legal recognition that procedural existence does not begin with a system timestamp but with the actual ability of the citizen to become aware of the administrative act and respond to it. Without this recognition, technology silently alters legal guarantees while the rhetoric of modernization continues to claim improvement.

Chapter 3

The digital burden shift

The transition to digital administration has been celebrated as a transformation that would empower citizens. The platforms appear to grant autonomy because they allow access without intermediaries and outside traditional office schedules (OECD, 2020). Yet autonomy has been redefined. To participate in the administrative process, individuals must now master technological environments that operate with minimal institutional support. The state remains in control of outcomes, but the labor required to activate and sustain the procedure belongs to the user.

This article refers to that transformation as a digital burden shift. It is neither accidental nor temporary. It is the structural result of administrative modernization pursued without a corresponding renovation of the legal guarantees that protect the exercise of rights. When digital platforms operate as the main administrative infrastructure, the individual becomes responsible for the success of each technical action. The right to petition and respond becomes a sequence of tasks that demand accuracy, persistence and availability at all times. Compliance is no longer limited to substantive legal requirements. It must also include technological performance.

The legal professional is directly affected by this shift. The lawyer becomes a procedural technician whose practice depends on the reliability of the system. Tasks that once required legal judgment now depend on controlling technological contingencies. A filing may be drafted perfectly and still fail because of a format discrepancy. A hearing may be inaccessible because of a failed authentication. The professional expertise that should define the field becomes secondary to the ability to operate tools that do not always communicate clearly what they expect. The burden expands, yet remains unseen by the institutional actor who benefits from the transfer of effort.

For ordinary citizens, the consequences are even greater. The digital bureaucratic environment requires constant self-monitoring. A missed alert may jeopardize an application. A misinterpreted interface may invalidate a claim. A system error may erase weeks of preparation. The administration presents these risks as isolated glitches. For

those who interact with the system, they are part of the normal experience. The uncertainty generated by technological mediation becomes a persistent emotional weight. The platform does not acknowledge this cost. The law does not recognize it. Nonetheless, it exists and determines whether rights remain alive or vanish silently (Fundación Alternativas, 2023).

The distribution of burdens is therefore asymmetrical. The administration benefits from reduced operational demands because it no longer needs to manage physical contact with citizens. The user absorbs the invisible labor required to make the system work in practice. This distribution would be less problematic if the technology guaranteed reliability and universal accessibility. The evidence shows that neither of these conditions is assured (United Nations, 2022). The system does not adapt to the user. The user must adapt to the system. The result is a procedural structure where the people most dependent on public services face the greatest obstacles to accessing them.

The digital burden shift is not a technical detail. It is a change in the foundation of the administrative relationship. The law historically recognized the state as the bearer of procedural duties, because exercising public power includes the obligation to make rights accessible. Digital administration blurs that principle. When technology becomes the condition for compliance, the boundary between legal responsibility and technical capacity becomes unstable. The individual is held accountable for failures originating in a system they did not design and cannot fix. The discourse of modernization continues to present these changes as enhancements. The lived experience suggests that the cost of progress has been imposed on those who are least responsible for how it unfolds.

3.1 Citizens as operators of the state's infrastructure

Digital administration was introduced with the expectation that citizens would finally engage with a state freed from the inertia of traditional bureaucracy. The promise of direct access and continuous availability suggested a form of governance that would simplify participation. Yet these benefits have altered the balance of the administrative relationship. Individuals no longer interact with a process executed by public authorities. They become responsible for activating, sustaining and validating the technological systems through which public authority now manifests itself (OECD, 2020). Procedural agency becomes indistinguishable from technical performance.

Technological mediation transforms expressions of citizenship into operational tasks. Authenticating identity credentials, navigating hidden routes within interfaces, converting file formats and monitoring notifications become essential to preserve procedural existence. None of these actions is recognized legally as a public service

burden, although each of them is required for the legal system to acknowledge rights in digital form (Bovens & Zouridis, 2002). The user carries the responsibility for ensuring that the system records the act, even when the cause of failure lies within the system itself. This change exposes a profound structural asymmetry. The legal system presumes equal readiness to engage with digital processes. Reality shows that access to devices, stable connectivity and digital comprehension remains uneven across populations and territories (United Nations, 2022). The state accepts the benefits of automation while disregarding the conditions necessary for equal participation. When users must compensate for infrastructural deficits, rights transition from guaranteed access to contingent access. The law continues to protect equality in principle while inequality in practice expands. Even jurisdictions with advanced infrastructures confirm this dynamic. In the European Union, strong identity frameworks enhance authenticity, yet they require technical proficiency and external support for ordinary users, who face barriers similar to those eliminated from physical offices (Fundación Alternativas, 2023). In Latin America, the expansion of digital channels has increased administrative reach. The ability to effectively complete procedures remains concentrated in areas with higher income and connectivity (ECLAC, 2021). The digital state extends presence without ensuring that rights can be exercised uniformly.

From a legal perspective, this evolution challenges the understanding of administrative duty. Historically the state guaranteed that access to rights would not depend on specialized capacity. Digital transformation inverts that responsibility by mandating that users mitigate the limitations of the platform with persistence and skill (Cerrillo i Martínez, 2011). The failure to overcome technological obstacles results in procedural harm attributed to the individual rather than to the infrastructure. Legal protection becomes conditional upon compliance with technical requirements that the law does not acknowledge.

This form of governance operates through design. The interface determines when rights materialize and when they disappear. Individuals must continuously produce evidence of presence within the system in order to remain visible to the administration. The citizen exists legally only to the extent that the platform recognizes the proof of that existence. The bureaucracy appears reduced because its weight has been redistributed. The state gains efficiency while individuals assume the invisible labor necessary to sustain the environment in which authority is exercised. Digital administration extends public power while concealing the expansion of citizen obligations behind the discourse of innovation.

3.2 The lawyer as hybrid technician

Digital administration has reshaped the professional identity of the lawyer. The traditional model of legal representation relied on a shared procedural language between lawyers and the state. That language was rooted in legal norms and human interaction. The rise of digital platforms introduces a technological layer that governs visibility within administrative processes before any legal argument can be considered (Rose-Ackerman & Lindseth, 2017). The existence of a claim inside the state's procedural domain depends on a sequence of operations that must be executed correctly to achieve recognition by the system.

This change expands the scope of professional responsibility without modifying its legal boundaries. The lawyer must now succeed in tasks not recognized as part of legal work. Preparing arguments and interpreting the law remain necessary, but they are not enough to ensure participation. The validity of any claim requires the platform to register it properly, which demands continuous adaptation to technical conditions beyond the lawyer's control (Fundación Alternativas, 2023). Professional performance becomes inseparable from the capacity to operate the system with precision.

The shift in risk allocation is equally significant. Under traditional administration, technical errors could be attributed to the state, opening a path for corrective intervention. Digital environments invert the burden by expecting the lawyer to document and explain failures generated by infrastructures that remain opaque to users (Bovens & Zouridis, 2002). The absence of traces leaves the professional responsible for defending a right that may not exist within the system's records, even though every legal requirement has been fulfilled. Accountability becomes distorted when the system erases the path of causality. This transformation also touches the ethical foundation of legal practice. Lawyers are trained to protect clients from the consequences of state power. They must now protect them as well from failures that arise without human decision. The duty of diligence expands into a duty of technological vigilance that demands anticipation of invisible errors. The lawyer builds defensive strategies against uncertainty produced by interfaces that hide their functioning. The profession is evaluated by outcomes determined not only by legal reasoning but by the stability and responsiveness of the infrastructure.

At the systemic level, the paradox becomes clear. The state increases efficiency by shifting procedural tasks to users, yet the public perception attributes any failure to the professional who interacts with the system (OECD, 2020). The delegation of operational labor is hidden, while responsibility remains visible. The lawyer becomes a mediator between the legal order and the technological environment, accountable for both even though control extends only to one. The administrative state increases its

reliance on automation but does not acknowledge the practical consequences of that reliance. The emergence of the hybrid technician lawyer requires legal recognition because the right to effective assistance now depends on conditions that exceed traditional competence. If digital administration becomes the primary gateway for the exercise of rights, the legal system must protect individuals against harms arising from technological fragility. Otherwise, the burdens placed on lawyers convert access to justice into an uneven contest in which the capacity to navigate platforms determines who may be heard as a legal subject. The profession stands at a threshold where defending rights means also defending the possibility of participation within the system that claims to guarantee them.

3.3 Invisible labor and psychological cost

The digitalization of administrative procedures introduces a layer of invisible labor that has direct implications for due process. The citizen must engage in continued monitoring of platforms, verify system acknowledgments and document every step of the interaction in case the platform later denies the existence of the act (Fundación Alternativas, 2023). This labor is not recognized as part of the administrative procedure, yet failure to perform it may result in procedural loss. The state benefits from reduced operational obligations, while the burden of ensuring procedural validity rests on individuals who are frequently unaware of these unspoken requirements.

The psychological effects of this model are legally relevant. The fear of missing a deadline or failing to receive a system notification produces a heightened level of stress that accompanies every interaction with the digital state. The absence of visible progress does not merely generate inconvenience. It generates doubt about the existence of one's rights within the system. The constant need for vigilance transforms compliance into a defensive act rather than a participatory one (Cerrillo i Martínez, 2011). When the stability of a claim depends on factors outside the user's understanding or control, legal security becomes fragile.

This ongoing vigilance alters the normative balance between the state and the governed. Administrative law historically presupposed that the state carries the duty to inform and guide individuals through procedural requirements. Digital platforms reverse this principle by assuming that users must actively monitor the system in order to protect themselves from administrative consequences (Bovens & Zouridis, 2002). The duty to provide notice becomes a burden to detect notice. The responsibility to guarantee procedural rights becomes a responsibility to chase indicators of their existence.

The invisibility of this labor contributes to a distorted perception of public service

performance. Administrations present digitalization as evidence of modernization and efficiency, yet the cost of this efficiency is transferred to private routines and professional responsibilities (Andersen et al., 2010). The individual performs repeated tasks to ensure that the system has recognized their actions, while the administration remains shielded behind automation. The gap between official discourse and lived experience expands. Public legitimacy is affected when technological mediation becomes a continuous source of anxiety for those who depend on the state.

From a legal standpoint, the psychological cost of digital bureaucracy acquires constitutional significance. The ability to exercise rights must not depend on permanent alertness. If digital administration imposes conditions that undermine predictability and access to legal remedies, the state must be held accountable for the burdens it has transferred (Rose-Ackerman & Lindseth, 2017). Efficiency measured only from the perspective of the administration fails to capture the totality of the process. Due process requires that the state take responsibility for the infrastructure through which it exercises power.

Digital modernization cannot be understood as successful if it undermines the conditions under which rights are exercised. The invisible labor demanded from citizens and lawyers reveals that technology can widen the distance between institutions and individuals. Recognizing the psychological cost is part of recognizing the legal consequences of the digital burden shift. Procedural legitimacy depends on ensuring that the pursuit of efficiency does not transform participation in the administrative process into a test of endurance beyond the reach of legal protection.

Chapter 4

Evidence and comparative insights

Digital administration has advanced unevenly across jurisdictions, producing diverse institutional landscapes and distinct models of technological mediation. Some states have prioritized broad accessibility and user-centered design, while others have accelerated automation without adjusting legal guarantees. The result is a global variety of systems that share a common feature. All require the citizen to interact with a technological structure that stands between the individual and the state (OECD, 2020). The law has not adapted to this shift with equal speed, leaving many procedural experiences governed by rules that were never intended for digital environments.

Comparative observation is essential not to identify an ideal model but to understand the structural risks that emerge when technological mediation becomes the primary interface for administrative activity. Each jurisdiction reveals different forms of burden shifting, distinct vulnerabilities in notification systems and unique configurations of inequality. These differences demonstrate that digital administration is not merely a technical innovation. It reorganizes core aspects of state authority and procedural fairness across borders (United Nations, 2022). The comparative lens reveals patterns of harm that remain obscured when reforms are evaluated exclusively from the institutional perspective.

At the center of this transformation is a tension between modernization and legal protection. Administrations seek to streamline workflows and reduce operational cost, yet the law demands that procedural rights remain accessible and effective. Evidence from multiple jurisdictions shows that this tension cannot be resolved solely by technological iteration. It requires a doctrinal response. The digital state produces challenges that must be integrated into the very concept of due process and the administrative obligation to guarantee participation without disproportionate burden (Rose-Ackerman & Lindseth, 2017). The comparative analysis therefore provides not only factual context but also direction for normative development.

4.1 Electronic notification and constitutional guarantees in digital administration

Electronic notification has become a defining feature of digital administration because it enables immediate communication of decisions and deadlines. In European jurisdictions that have advanced digital infrastructures, the system presumes that users maintain continuous awareness of official platforms. The timestamp generated by the system is treated as notice, even when the content is not immediately accessible to the user (Fundación Alternativas, 2023). Legal time begins when the platform records an action, not when the individual understands that action. Procedural fairness is therefore contingent on uninterrupted digital vigilance.

Constitutional principles require that individuals be informed of administrative acts that affect their rights, yet digital architectures often place the responsibility for notification entirely on the recipient. The shift modifies the concept of notice by transforming it into an expectation of permanent attentiveness. The burden intensifies for lawyers, who must monitor multiple portals and support systems to preserve procedural visibility. Technical interruptions or ambiguous architectures can trigger deadlines without effective awareness (Cerrillo i Martínez, 2011). The psychological cost of constant monitoring becomes an unacknowledged component of access to rights.

Automation accelerates communication, but speed introduces fragility when the system imposes consequences without ensuring that individuals can respond. Errors of interface design or routing can produce real harms even when diligence is maintained. The technology interprets silence as consent or acquiescence, although silence may result from obstruction or miscommunication. The constitutional promise of access becomes conditional on a digital environment that is not always stable or intuitive.

The European experience illustrates that modernization cannot be grounded in the assumption that technological availability guarantees equality. Interfaces may increase reach while reducing protection against loss of procedural opportunity. Legal certainty requires that the state recognize the practical implications of technological mediation. When the platform itself shapes the terms of participation, constitutional safeguards must adapt to address vulnerabilities produced not by administrative discretion but by system design. Rights remain theoretical if their exercise depends on a procedural architecture that many users struggle to navigate.

4.2 Digital courts, remote hearings and system-dependent justice

The acceleration of digital justice has been justified by the need to maintain judicial continuity while improving accessibility. The expansion of remote hearings and virtual case management systems has reshaped the procedural model across multiple jurisdictions (United Nations, 2022). Courts claim increased efficiency as documents, arguments and evidence travel instantly across platforms. Yet the effectiveness of these systems relies on technological infrastructures that are not neutral. When the system fails, the right to a fair hearing becomes vulnerable.

Remote hearings redefine procedural interaction. The ability to present arguments, examine witnesses and follow court dialogue depends on the stability of the connection and the reliability of the device used (ECLAC, 2021). The judge may continue speaking while a party remains momentarily disconnected. A procedural moment can pass before the individual has the means to participate. The resulting disadvantage stems not from legal reasoning but from technological fragility. Inequality emerges silently because the proceeding continues while one party struggles simply to re enter it.

The digital court introduces a distinction between those who are able to adapt and those who remain exposed to loss of procedural visibility. Lawyers must assume expanded responsibilities including monitoring digital notifications across platforms, ensuring compatibility of formats and intervening rapidly when the system behaves unpredictably. The risk of missing a deadline or failing to see an uploaded document reflected in the system can lead to irreversible outcomes (Fundación Alternativas, 2023). Technical competence becomes a condition for legal credibility. Those without such competence find themselves disadvantaged in a process that claims equal access.

Regions with advanced digital structures also illustrate these tensions. Jurisdictions within the European Union demonstrate that sophisticated identity and authentication systems reduce some barriers while creating new vulnerabilities linked to complexity and lack of institutional support for users unfamiliar with technology (OECD, 2020). In Latin America, rapid digitalization after the pandemic has increased judicial reach, yet the experience of legal professionals and citizens shows frequent disruptions, unequal technical resources and constant uncertainty about the stability of the digital environment (ECLAC, 2021). The pattern is consistent. The system observes compliance. The user must secure its existence.

These developments challenge the assumption that modernization necessarily enhances justice. When participation requires permanent vigilance and technical dex-

terity, the digital shift becomes a source of exclusion. The court appears more accessible, yet the burden to ensure participation has grown. Technology accelerates the procedure while magnifying the consequences of small failures that were previously correctable through human intervention. The legitimacy of digital justice depends not only on the speed of adjudication but on guaranteeing that all participants can remain visible within the system that determines the fate of their claims. Digital administration cannot presume that technological mediation automatically produces equality. It must assume responsibility for ensuring that the environment through which justice operates protects the individual against the risk of procedural disappearance.

4.3 Administrative modernization in unequal digital contexts

Digital administration develops within social and infrastructural environments that remain deeply unequal. The promise of universal access to public services assumes that populations share similar technological capacities, which is not reflected in the lived reality of many regions (United Nations, 2022). When modernization advances regardless of differences in connectivity, device availability and digital literacy, the distribution of procedural opportunities shifts away from the legal order and toward socioeconomic factors. Administrative rights become instantiated through systems that not all citizens can successfully operate.

Latin American experiences demonstrate this tension clearly. The expansion of online services in countries such as Argentina and Chile has enabled new channels for filing claims, accessing social programs and following administrative proceedings. However the effectiveness of those channels varies depending on the user's resources and location (ECLAC, 2021). Citizens in metropolitan areas may interact with digital portals normally, while those in regions with unstable internet service face recurring interruptions that compromise their procedural standing. The system presumes that all citizens possess identical conditions for digital participation. The evidence shows otherwise.

In Argentina digital transformation has reduced certain physical barriers yet introduced new dependencies related to authentication systems, device quality and basic interface comprehension. The administration delegates procedural functions to individuals who must manage technological interactions without institutional support proportional to their responsibility. This generates uncertainty about whether formal acts have been recognized by the system because confirmations may fail or remain ambiguous. Legal protection against these disruptions is limited because the platform itself

becomes the intermediary authority whose behavior is rarely transparent (Fundación Alternativas, 2023). The individual carries the burden of ensuring that digital actions exist within the administrative structure.

These situations reveal structural continuities between traditional and digital bureaucracy. Instead of eliminating barriers modernization can reproduce them in less visible forms. Citizens who were historically disadvantaged in accessing physical offices often remain disadvantaged when access occurs through screens. Digital tools do not eliminate inequality. They reorganize it. The state celebrates modernization by counting new services offered online. The citizen measures success by the system's ability to acknowledge procedural acts when they matter most. The two perspectives do not always converge (OECD, 2020). Efficiency gains at the institutional level may coincide with increased vulnerability for users.

The need arises to incorporate infrastructural inequality into the legal understanding of digital administration. Rights cannot be exercised if access depends on resources the legal system does not guarantee. Procedural fairness requires more than the formal availability of digital portals. It requires that institutions take responsibility for the contingencies introduced by technological mediation and the conditions necessary for citizens to maintain procedural visibility. Without such responsibility modernization functions as a transfer of risk to those who are least equipped to bear it. The law must acknowledge that a right mediated by technology without mechanisms of institutional support becomes a conditional right.

4.4 High-tech bureaucracy in Asia-Pacific: automation without transparency

The most advanced digital administrations in the world allow a deeper understanding of the thousand-click bureaucracy. Jurisdictions such as Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Australia have achieved high levels of coverage and interoperability in their public digital services (OECD, 2020). Administrative platforms support tax filings licensing social benefits and countless interactions that once required physical presence. The official narrative celebrates seamless efficiency and constant availability. However the practical experience demonstrates that technological sophistication does not resolve the structural tensions inherent to digital administration. It often conceals them.

Automation in public administration shapes procedural access through layers of technological control. Users must navigate authentication requirements that involve digital certificates and identity systems with strict verification protocols. Submissions must align with formatting rules that are rarely expressed in legal terms. When a sys-

tem rejects an action because of a technical characteristic unknown to the user the legal system often treats the attempt as if it never existed (Bovens & Zouridis, 2002). This erases procedural initiative and leaves the individual without a foundation to contest the failure. Public transparency becomes compromised by automated processes that do not communicate reasons for exclusion.

As services expand procedural dependency intensifies. More rights and obligations rely on successful interaction with administrative platforms. Citizens must ensure uninterrupted connectivity and maintain updated devices which places responsibility on individuals for conditions that the state itself does not guarantee (United Nations, 2022). Inequalities persist even where infrastructure is advanced. The technological divide reappears because it is embedded in the logic of bureaucratic systems that reward those who can adapt. This model challenges central principles of administrative law. Legal certainty requires that citizens understand how to comply with obligations and how to participate in procedures that affect their rights. When the interface governs access through undisclosed rules procedural legality becomes conditional. Administrative guarantees lose effectiveness if they depend on technological operations the user cannot control (Cerrillo i Martínez, 2011). The state gains operational efficiency while individuals face risks produced by invisible structures. That imbalance is incompatible with constitutional ideals that demand accountability from public authorities.

High technology in administrative tasks may create a perception of modernization while excluding those who cannot meet digital expectations. If failures remain silent and the state recognizes only what is visible to the system legal existence becomes contingent on technical success. The legitimacy of digital public administration depends on its ability to preserve equal access to rights. Without this foundation modernization becomes a form of procedural selection. Recognizing these burdens is necessary to ensure that technological transformation strengthens the rule of law rather than weakening it.

Chapter 5

Redefining technological due process

The legitimacy of administrative authority depends on the existence of procedures that allow individuals to assert rights and respond effectively to state decisions. In digital environments, this legitimacy requires more than formal guarantees based on written norms. It demands technological infrastructures that respond coherently to user actions, record procedural initiatives with reliability and communicate status in ways that enable individuals to protect their interests. The exercise of rights becomes inseparable from the responsiveness of the systems that sustain them, as the absence of clear acknowledgment can produce procedural harm equivalent to explicit refusal (Fountain, 2001). Digital due process requires that rights remain visible within the architecture that organizes administrative power.

Technological due process recognizes that digital infrastructures condition access to public authority. When the interface governs the existence of procedural acts, protection requires that the system ensure visibility, traceability and fairness in the flows of procedural time. Failures of notification or disruptions of connectivity cannot be treated as individual omissions when they arise from characteristics of the environment controlled by the state (United Nations, 2022). The digital state must assume responsibility for ensuring that the conditions necessary for participation are materially guaranteed, because the individual cannot control the inner logic of platforms that decide whether an act exists administratively.

5.1 From formal guarantees to system responsiveness

Public administration historically relied on material procedures that generated evidentiary traces. A stamped document or the confirmation by a clerk proved the existence of a legal act. The transition to digital environments dissolved those physical anchors and replaced them with automated acknowledgments whose legal meaning depends on the integrity of the system itself (OECD, 2020). The capacity to exercise rights

requires that platforms record every initiative in a manner that is accessible, reproducible and legally defensible. Without certainty about recognition, the user remains exposed to the possibility that the system silently nullifies the act. The resulting procedural insecurity is incompatible with the rule of law. Technical design shapes fairness in ways that legal doctrine does not always foresee. A technologically mediated right loses substance when its exercise depends on device performance, software compatibility or the opacity of data flows that the user cannot monitor. The state benefits from efficiency while citizens internalize new risks. The digital transformation can erode guarantees if institutional responsibility is not extended to the technological conditions that define access. Modern due process requires aligning legal norms with the infrastructures that implement them. If technology becomes part of the legal environment, it must also become part of legal accountability (ECLAC, 2021).

5.2 Infrastructure, power and the constitutional role of design

Public power is exercised through interfaces. The organization of screens, menus and messaging systems determines who can act and when. These design choices structure opportunities for participation and influence the outcome of administrative processes. Technology configures relationships of authority by controlling visibility, continuity and procedural presence. When legal protection depends on an infrastructure that individuals do not control, constitutional guarantees must adapt to defend the subject within that infrastructure (Rose-Ackerman & Lindseth, 2017). The purpose of due process is not limited to ensuring that authorities decide lawfully. It must also ensure that the pathway to decision remains accessible and intelligible.

The evolution toward digital administration requires that accountability follow the same trajectory. The responsibility of the state includes designing systems that do not generate exclusion through complexity or fragility. Digital modernization must be evaluated by its ability to sustain legal protection across diverse social conditions. If technological environments introduce friction, uncertainty or psychological strain that becomes a barrier to rights, the administrative relationship grows asymmetrical and the law fails to preserve citizenship on equal terms (Fundación Alternativas, 2023). Technological due process establishes a constitutional horizon where efficiency cannot operate at the expense of access to justice.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The digital transformation of public administration has reorganized bureaucracy rather than diminished it. The thousand-click bureaucracy represents a contemporary form of administrative power in which institutional labor becomes silent obligation for the individual. Authority remains in the hands of the state, but the work needed to activate it shifts to citizens and lawyers. The burden is fragmented and embedded in interfaces that demand technical proficiency, uninterrupted availability and permanent alertness. This labor remains invisible because it appears as self service, although the consequences of failure are imposed exclusively on those who rely on the system to assert their rights. The principles that uphold legal protection must be expanded to reflect this transformation. Procedural guarantees cannot remain anchored in assumptions about stable participation and human administration. Technology now mediates authority, structures access and determines whether a legal act has occurred. Failures in the system may affect rights as severely as human arbitrariness. Administrative legitimacy depends on the responsiveness, traceability and clarity of the technological environment. The law must treat system design as a normative element of due process rather than a merely operational matter.

Comparative experiences confirm that this transformation is universal. It affects jurisdictions with advanced infrastructures as well as those extending connectivity in unequal contexts. The procedural landscape has changed everywhere. Differences in resources and digital literacy now shape access to public authority with an intensity the traditional bureaucracy never achieved. Digital modernization can reduce certain physical barriers while reinforcing structural inequalities because the responsibility for sustaining participation falls on individuals rather than institutions.

Absolute elimination of bureaucratic burden has never been a realistic objective. Administrative organization requires procedures that mediate power and ensure order. The essential task is to preserve accountability in the evolution of those procedures. Technological due process must become a guiding principle so that public systems ac-

knowledge submissions reliably, communicate expectations clearly and ensure that errors do not produce harms borne solely by the user. Efficiency must never justify a reduction in the substantive protection of rights.

Recognizing the thousand-click bureaucracy is necessary to prevent a silent erosion of legal protection. The digital state expands its reach through platforms, yet it must also expand its responsibility for the environments it creates. The exercise of rights cannot depend on the capacity to overcome obstacles introduced by design. Modernization is legitimate only when it strengthens the ability of individuals to appear before the state as legal subjects whose existence is recognized both by law and by the systems that enact it.

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